

1881

"The Pleasure Dance in its Relation to Religion and Morality."

A SERMON

PREACHED IN

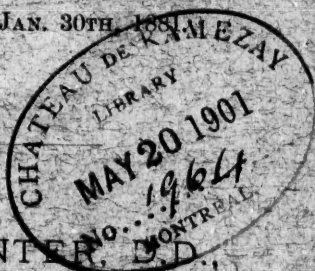
BLOOR ST. METHODIST CHURCH, YORKVILLE,

ON SABBATH EVENING, JAN. 30TH, 1881.

BY THE

REV. W. J. HUNTER, D.D.,

OF THE TORONTO CONFERENCE, METHODIST CHURCH OF CANADA.



PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

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METHODIST BOOK AND PUBLISHING HOUSE,
78 AND 80 KING STREET EAST.

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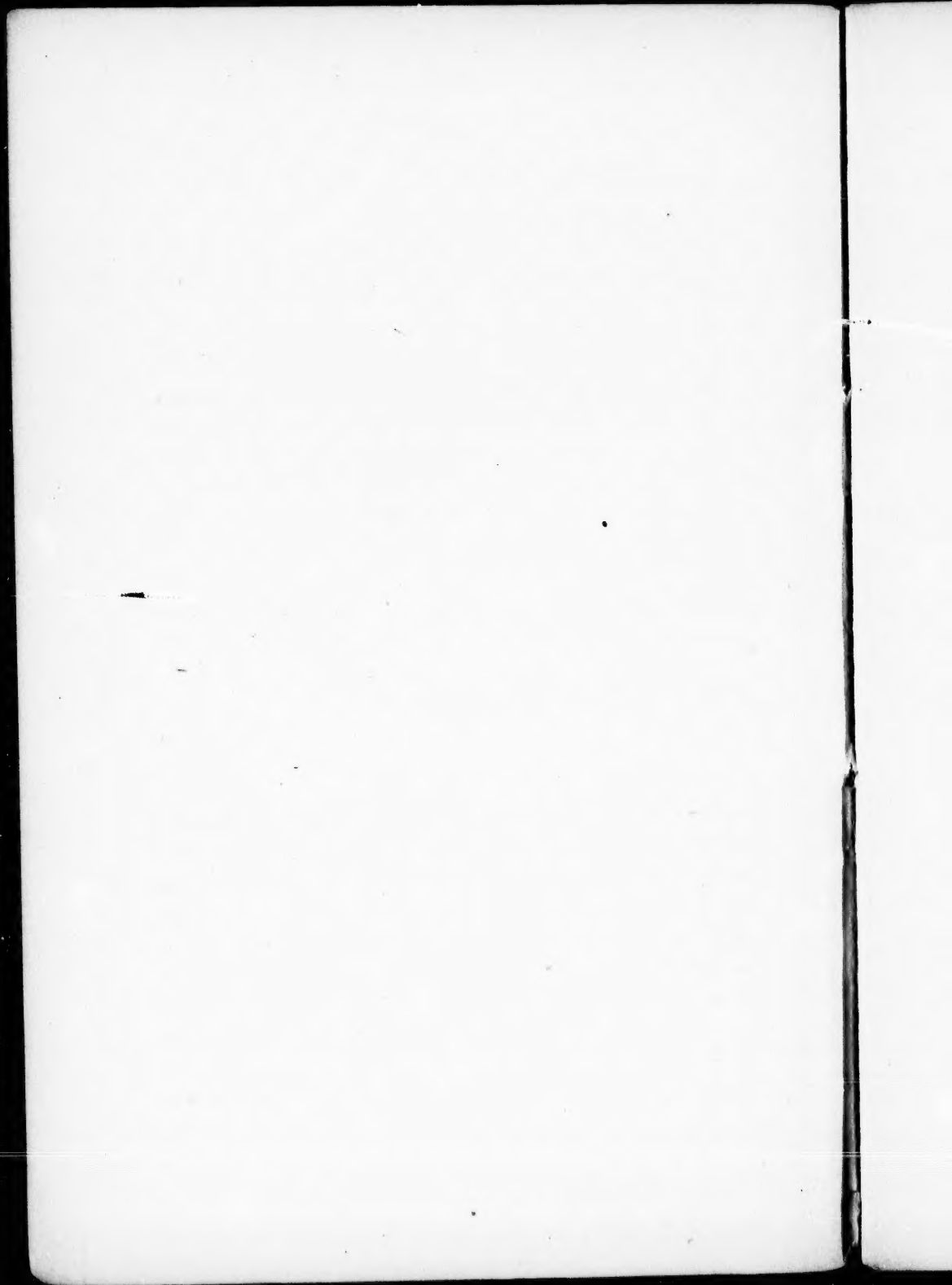
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PREFACE.

AT the earnest solicitation of many friends I give this sermon to the public ; and I give it just as I preached it, without revising a sentence or changing a word. For the many expressions of approval tendered since the delivery of the sermon, and especially for the prayers of God's people that my courage may not fail in the day of battle, I feel grateful to God and to the loyal and devoted people amongst whom it is my privilege to live and labour. I have purposely made up the strongest points in the argument from the utterances of great and good men connected with other branches of the Christian Church, contenting myself with a simple recital of the clause in our Book of Discipline bearing on the subject. No pure-minded person will take exception to the chaste and faultless language in which these eminent authorities describe the immodesty of round dances, though it may cause the participants and apologists of the dance to wince a little. Still, everybody knows that the description is true ; and I have never yet met man or woman prepared to defend round dances. The usual method of attempting to break the force of arguments against dancing is to affect sensitiveness at the descriptions given of it ; but if a description of the dance, given by the most cultured minds and in the choicest language, shock the modesty of these persons, what must it be to witness the performance itself, or to take part in it ? That is the argument

in a nutshell. I would not have my ministerial brethren suppose that when I say, "I am told that it (dancing) is introduced into Methodist families and that the ministers wink at it," etc., etc., I accept that statement. Our ministers do not wink at it; but when prominent members of the Church tolerate it in their homes and allow their children to indulge in the dance, they cripple our efforts and bring the Discipline into contempt. I know that our people, on the whole, are loyal and devoted, and no man need fear to "declare the whole counsel of God" in a Methodist pulpit.

I respect the honesty of those ministers who take the position that it is not prudent to preach on dancing, but when I find them preaching on the theatre and gambling, and the house of the strange woman, I am at a loss to see the consistency of their position. I am convinced that the pleasure dance is doing more to-day, in Methodist circles, to quench the Spirit and hinder the work of God, and keep our young people out of the Church, than any other amusement or practice. And because we do not preach against it, the impression prevails that we do not regard it as a serious and ruinous evil.

Since the delivery of this sermon, kind friends have placed at my disposal various books and pamphlets containing valuable articles on the subject here discussed, and on other subjects, which I propose to examine in proper succession. For this kindness I tender my heartfelt thanks, and I pray that all who read my sermon may be led to an honest survey of "THE PLEASURE DANCE IN ITS RELATION TO RELIGION AND MORALITY."

W. J. HUNTER.

YORKVILLE, 7th February, 1881.

THE PLEASURE DANCE

IN ITS RELATION TO

RELIGION AND MORALITY.

"And the meek will He teach His way."—PSALM XXV. 9.

ACCORDING to announcement, I am to address you to-night on "The Pleasure Dance in its Relation to Religion and Morality." The subject is one of great delicacy, and needs to be wisely handled.

I have prayed for the spirit of wisdom and understanding in the preparation of this sermon, and I now pray for the spirit of tenderness and love in the delivery of it. I am not here to speak dogmatically, but to assist you to what I conceive to be right and scriptural conclusions on a subject which has elicited and still elicits a wide diversity of opinion. It is a source of perplexity to Christian parents who desire to train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and at the same time fear, lest a too rigid enforcement of discipline might alienate filial affection and produce results the very opposite of those intended. It is a source of per-

plexity to many youthful professors of religion who want to live a Christian life; who have serious doubts touching the propriety of participating in this amusement; but who meet it in social gatherings, and sometimes even in the houses of church members. It is a source of perplexity to many seriously disposed persons who try to persuade themselves that there is no harm in it; and yet it is the very thing which hinders a full surrender to God and keeps them out of His church. Now I believe that if we are prepared to investigate this subject honestly and without prejudice; if we are willing to relinquish our preconceived opinions should we find them without foundation; if we say with David, "Show me Thy ways, O Lord: teach me Thy paths," there shall be fulfilled in us the promise of my text, "And the meek will He teach His way."

In the first place let us endeavour to ascertain the teaching of God on this subject as presented in history. All history proves that dancing in some form has existed among all nations, and that it was originally practised only as a religious act. Let us begin with Bible history, and we shall find the dance mentioned for the first time in connection with Israel's passage of the Red Sea. In Exodus xv. 20 we read, "And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances." In Judges xi. 34, we find that when Jephthah returned from the defeat of the Ammonites, his daughter "came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances." And

again, in the 21st chapter of Judges, we find an account of a dance by the daughters of Shiloh in connection with a religious feast. Then, in 1st Samuel xviii. 6, we read that, "when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistines, the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music." Also, in 2nd Samuel vi. 14, we are told that when David brought the Ark of the Lord from the house of Obed-edom, "David danced before the Lord with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod." Again, in Jeremiah xxxi. 4, God speaks of the restoration of Israel, saying, "Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel: thou shalt again be adorned with thy tabrets, and thou shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry."

Now, here are six distinct passages of Scripture in which we find dancing mentioned; and in every instance the dance was a religious act, and in no case thus far do we find the sexes mixing in it. Let us now look at another class of Bible-texts in which the dance is mentioned.

In the 32nd chapter of Exodus we have an account of Israel's idolatry when they made a golden calf and worshipped it. And in the 19th verse we are told that "when Moses came nigh unto the camp he saw the calf and the dancing, and his anger waxed hot." Again, in 1st Samuel, 30th chapter and at the 16th verse, we find David surprising the Amalekites while they were "spread abroad, eating, and drinking, and

dancing." In Matt. xiv. 6-12, we have an account of the dance of the daughter of Herodias, before a drunken king and his adulterous wife, and which cost John the Baptist his head. Then again, in Job xxi. 11-14, it is said of the wicked, "They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance. They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave. Therefore they say unto God, depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways."

Now, in each of these instances we find the dance a mere carnal gratification and in very bad company. The passages which I have quoted constitute, with their parallel passages, the history of dancing as recorded in the Bible. When our Lord says, "We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced," and when He mentions music and dancing in connection with the return of the Prodigal Son, the words are used simply in the way of illustration, as when David, grateful to God for innumerable blessings, exclaims, "Thou hast turned my mourning into dancing." So that when Solomon says "there is a time to dance" we are not warranted in applying his words to any but the religious dances of Scripture. Indeed, no argument can be founded on these words of Solomon, for in the same connection he says, "there is a time to kill."

If we turn now from sacred to secular history we find in its earliest pages that the dance was observed only in religious worship. Plato affirms that amongst the Egyptians it was never practised as an amusement,

but was strictly a religious ceremony. Servius pleads for dancing as a part of worship, on the ground that the whole body should join in acts of adoration; and in Homer the noblest characters, from the gods down, are represented as performing in the dance. It was equally so in Greece. Her most noted men cultivated the dance as a religious ceremony. Rome was the first to break down the purely religious character of dancing and convert it into an amusement. All modesty was set aside, and vice of every kind found in the dance its full satisfaction. The dance actually threatened to uproot the foundations of the Empire, and the Romans passed a law prohibiting it. It was thus suppressed as immoral and ruinous to the State, by a heathen legislature, 186 years before the Christian era. As we trace the early history of the most civilized States of Europe, we find that dancing was not cultivated as an art, nor valued as an accomplishment. In the fifteenth century it again forced itself on public attention. In Italy, at the marriage of the Duke of Milan with a Spanish princess, it was introduced in the form of a theatrical entertainment, in which the actors were men only. It retained this form for about two centuries. And now we approach the origin of the amusement which, in these modern days, has assumed such vast proportions.

In A.D. 1681, an entertainment was given in the court of Louis XIV. of France, in which for the first time, the sexes mingled in the dance. Confined for a time to the theatre, dancing was gradually introduced

into private assemblies, and I am bound to say that it was as gradually stripped of many of its indecencies until, in our day, it is patronized by many whose virtue and morality cannot be questioned.

And this brings me to the real subject of the hour—the pleasure dance of modern society. It is no mere abstract question you propose when you ask, Is there any harm in dancing? And before I proceed to answer your question, let me be perfectly understood by my young friends. I am no enemy to innocent amusements. God bless the young people, and keep them young for many a day. We all grow old too soon. I would be the last man to dampen the ardour of youth, or cast a cloud over the young life. A youth without spice in the composition—nutmeg, or cloves, or ginger—is not worth much. But when you ask me, Is there any harm in dancing? my answer is that your question is misleading. In the simple act of dancing there is no more harm than in the act of walking; but dancing, in the abstract, is a very different thing from the pleasure dance of modern society. If you want to cultivate health, and with that view spend an hour every morning in dancing all alone in your room, I am not going to object. But that is quite a different thing from the pleasure dance as we find it to-day, with all its associations and tendencies. I will take the liberty at this point of dealing with the grounds on which some good people are disposed to look with favour on this amusement. The first ground is that it is regarded as “an accomplishment, and that it gives ease and gracefulness in society.” Now, if you consult

the dictionary you will find that the meaning of the word accomplishment is, "that which constitutes elegance of mind or elegance of manners;" but no mere bodily exercise can constitute or impart elegance of mind. The mind is a subtle spiritual essence, acted upon only by thought, study, and intellectual exertion. You cannot acquire elegance of mind by first lifting up one foot and then lifting up the other. Can you acquire elegance of manners? I am not prepared to deny that the art of dancing, as now taught, embraces many good lessons on politeness, and that it does impart a certain ease and gracefulness of manner; but it is not necessary to go to a dancing-school, or to attend dancing-parties, in order to acquire ease and gracefulness in society. There are thousands of ladies and gentlemen who have never danced, and whose elegance of manners no one will question. Those amiable and accomplished ladies, Mrs. President Hayes and Mrs. ex-President Polk, of the United States, while receiving and treating their guests with great kindness and politeness, have never permitted dancing in the White House during the terms in which they have presided over its social ceremonies.

Another ground on which a plea for dancing is based is, that "young people must have amusement, and our social gatherings will be dull and stupid without something of this kind." The first part of this plea I have already granted, but I object to the second part as illogical in its reasoning and fatal in its conclusion. We might as well cast the Bible to the winds as to argue that because young people want to do so and so,

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therefore they may do so and so. But this is not all. Such an argument is most uncomplimentary to those in whose behalf it is employed. It insinuates that there is on their part an intellectual inability to spend an evening in a rational manner. When Plato denounces the custom of introducing dancing girls at the entertainments of the Greeks, he declares that none but those who are incapable of amusing themselves by rational conversation will have recourse to such means of enjoyment. An evening dull and stupid without dancing! With the whole range of literature, and science, and religion at command; with the great events which are transpiring every week in this wonderful age, when the world in miniature is laid on our breakfast tables every morning through the agency of the printing-press. If under these circumstances a social party is dull and stupid without dancing, I pity the intelligence of the party. And I want to say, in all earnestness, that young people who cannot spend an evening together without "taking to their heels" will have a pretty dull time of it when they come to spend a lifetime together. Perhaps you will say, "Better dance than talk gossip and slander your neighbours." But that is no argument at all. I suppose it is better to lie than to steal, but if I refuse to lie I am not bound to steal. And besides, the argument, that it is better to dance than slander your neighbours, is one which you would be ashamed to reduce to the test of practicality. Who would mingle in the dance if their presence on the floor proclaimed to all beholders, "We are here in order

to save ourselves from the more disagreeable performance of slandering our neighbours?"

I come now to the grounds on which I base my objections to the pleasure dance as subversive of religion and morality. My first ground of objection is based on its associations. You cannot judge of the merits or demerits of any business, or occupation, or amusement without weighing all its associations and tendencies. The first association and tendency of the pleasure dance is *an injurious effect upon the health*. The performance begins late in the evening and lasts till early in the morning. The atmosphere is made impure and unhealthy by the violent physical exercise involved, and the tired dancers snatch a few hours of sleep, and then rise to the duties of the day, pale, and haggard, and yawning, as though they had awoke from a drunken debauch. I anticipate the objection you will offer to this line of thought. You will tell me that social gatherings, generally, are characterized by all the excess I have mentioned, even when dancing forms no part of the entertainment. And your objection is well taken. Our social customs need a reformation radical as that of Luther in religion and theology. The whole system of late parties and midnight suppers is in defiance of the laws of health and the laws of God. Our bodies are just as sacred as our souls. They have been redeemed, and are destined to be splendidly rebuilt, and made like the glorious body of Christ. They are the temples of the Holy Ghost, and it is our imperative duty to preserve them in health, and chastity, and temperance.

I never attend one of these midnight parties without going home condemned, and I plead with our people that they will go back to the good old common-sense habits of our fathers. Let the supper be not later than eight o'clock, and let the party break up not later than eleven. But when to all these excesses you add that of dancing, you tempt disease and death to come in at every pore of your being.

Nineteen-twentieths of those who seek recreation in the pleasure dance—especially young men—are on their feet and at work from seven in the morning till six at night; and what they want is rest for the tired muscles, and recreation for the languishing brain. In all our cemeteries there are hundreds of tombstones on which a true inscription would read, "Here lies a victim to the pleasure dance." It prescribes light clothing, and thin shoes, and tight lacing, and everything favourable to consumption and headache, and dyspepsia, and an early grave.

Another pernicious association of the pleasure dance is the *dissipation of mind* it produces. In a young country like ours, circumstances render it necessary to devote the most of our time to our material interests. As a people, we must work for a living; and we are so burdened with toil and business, that literature, and art, and other things calculated to refine and elevate are denied the attention they deserve. And it is a shame that the golden hours which might be thus employed are spent in a laborious bodily exercise which tires the muscles and unfits us for the duties of life. Dr. Adam Clarke testifies that the

pleasure dance created in him a fondness for company, an impatience of control, a passion for finer clothing than he was able to wear. It drowned the voice of conscience, and impelled him to seek happiness only in this life.

Needless expenditure is another association of the pleasure dance. Our money is not our own. It is a talent bestowed by the Almighty, and He will hold us responsible for the use we make of it. Dancing parties call for richer dresses and finer coats than are required anywhere else, and they have led many a young man to ruin and many a family to bankruptcy.

But I come now to an objection against the pleasure dance, stronger far than any I have yet mentioned—*It tends to subvert and destroy our native instinct of modesty.* Dr. Goodrich, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, Cleveland, Ohio, some years ago preached a sermon on "Christian Morals in Social Life," in which he says: "There is born in all of us a delicate perception of what is modest and pure. There is a silent law which tells us all alike, with one instinct, what are the due bounds of familiarity in behaviour, in address, in the very contact of our persons. Everyone whose native sensibilities have not been blunted, feels at once what constitutes an undue freedom, either in manners or in the slightest suggestion, tone, or allusion of language; and every modest mind resents such liberty and sees in it an affront. Now, against this instinct of modesty, worldliness, from its vantage-ground of place and power, wages subtle and incessant war. Whether by design or not, there have crept into

those usages of society, which have come down to us from worldly, and especially from foreign life, not a few allowances and freedoms which, without the sanction of high custom, everyone would call immodest. When, some years ago, a distinguished citizen of Philadelphia, who was at the very summit of society, first saw the waltz, then just introduced from France, he broke out in indignation and declared, that if any man should offer to dance after that fashion with his wife or daughters he would horsewhip him on the spot. He spoke bluntly out an honest instinct of our nature. Nothing but the overbearing insolence of worldly custom has persuaded any who pretend to modesty to practice that and other similar dances of modern date. I should think worse of womanhood if I did not believe that the novice in such pleasures often feels the silent protest of a native delicacy against the indiscriminate contacts, if not unusual freedoms, to which these and even simpler forms of dancing are liable. Certainly, any man who should offer to approach and half embrace a true woman in the quiet of her parlour would be thrust with indignation from the dwelling, never again to enter its door. But if such a freedom is insolent in private, what makes it tolerable in public? If an embrace is not to be endured in the decorum of a parlour, why is it to be endured, with prolonged indulgence, in all the swaying throng and pressure of a select assemblage? If it would be an offence and an outrage in an evening call, why is it permitted in the presence of invited guests? Why, but that the power of worldly custom has strangely marred the pure in-

stinct which God has put in us, and worn away, with polished and persistent impudence, the finer sense of modesty. It is easy for parents to be indulgent. It is common for the young to be thoughtless. Young men may heedlessly say, 'If women are satisfied with such modes of pleasure, it certainly is not for us to object.' But I am sure that many such a young man, if he had but known a mother's love, and cherished a sister's or a wife's honour, would cut off his right hand before he allowed them to be subject to such a law of social life. He knows with what kind of comment every such freedom is liable to be discussed, beyond a woman's hearing. And if he give a sober second thought, he will feel that for him there is a manlier part. He is to protect, not to trifle, with female delicacy. Rather forego every such form of pleasure, than hazard the slightest disrespect to one who bears the name of Woman."

A writer in one of our Quarterlies, speaking of the pleasure dance, says: "It mingles the sexes in such closeness of personal approach and contact as, outside of the dance, is nowhere tolerated in respectable society. It does this under a complexity of circumstances which conspire to heighten the impropriety of it. It is evening, and the hour is late; there is the delicious and unconscious intoxication of music, and motion in the blood; there is the strange confusing sense of being individually unobserved among so many, while yet the 'natural noble shame' that guards the purity of man and woman alone is absent. Such is the occasion, and still hour after hour the dance goes on, bringing hearts

so near that they almost beat against one another; darting the fine personal electricity across between the meeting fingers; flushing the face and lighting the eye with a quick language, subject often to gross interpretation on the part of the vile-hearted. Always the dance inclines to multiply opportunities of physical proximity and contact between the sexes, always to make them more prolonged and more daring."

I object to the pleasure dance on another ground. *It is inconsistent with the whole spirit and tenor of religion.* Everything that I have said up to this point is general in its application. But I speak now to Christian people, to those who profess to be the followers of Christ and guided by His Spirit and example. I have said that the pleasure dance is inconsistent with the whole spirit and tenor of religion, and my argument to sustain that position shall be practical rather than metaphysical. In the first place I ask you honestly, How many humble, pious, devoted Christians do you know who patronize the dance? Do you know of one whom you regard as a model of Christian character, and who is fond of dancing? In the next place, did you ever know a votary of the dance who, when converted to God, did not turn away from it forever? Can you think of a person addicted to dancing whom you would send for to pray with you, and talk to you, if you were dying? In the next place, would you like to have as your pastor and religious teacher a dancing minister? Would the people of the world themselves have any confidence in a minister who was known to indulge in this amuse-

ment? Every one of these questions you will answer in the negative, and wherefore? Because these two things—religion and the pleasure dance—are inconsistent and irreconcilable. I am aware that the opinion prevails that this view of the subject is limited to the Methodist Church, but that is a great mistake, as I shall now proceed to show.

The late Bishop McIlvane, of the Episcopalian Church, in one of his pastoral letters says: "Let me now turn to two objects in which there is no difficulty of discrimination—the theatre and the dance. The only line I would draw in regard to these is that of *entire exclusion*. And yet, my brethren, I am well aware how easy it is for the imagination to array both of these in such an abstract and elementary simplicity, that no harm could be detected in either. And the same precisely can easily be done with the card-table and horse-race. The exercise of graceful movement in the dance, and the exercise of speed in the horse-race, may easily be conceived of in such a light as to make them very innocent. But what if they were attempted to be got up under such an abstract form, and made common amusement in such elementary simplicity, how would they succeed? Strip them bare, till they stand in the simple innocence to which their defenders' arguments would reduce them, and the world would not have them. Were the trial made of a series of dancing assemblies, conducted in all respects as becomes the sobriety and spiritual-mindedness of the Christian character, so that it would be nothing inconsistent if every attendant were a devout and earnestly

pious person, it would need no prophet to predict their entire failure. The world would ridicule such a dance, and Christian people would think that they had something else to do than to attend it."

Bishop Mead, also of the Episcopalian Church, says of the pleasure dance: "As an amusement, seeing that it is a perversion of an ancient religious exercise, and has ever been discouraged by the sober-minded and pious of all nations on account of its evil tendencies and accompaniments, we ought conscientiously to inquire whether its great liability to abuse, and its many acknowledged abuses, should not make us frown upon it *in all its forms*. When taught to the young, it is attended with an expense of time and money which might be far better employed. It promotes the love of dress and pleasure, to which the young are already too prone; it tempts to vanity and love of display; it leads the young exactly into an opposite direction to that pointed out in the word of God and pledged in the baptismal vows."

If we turn now from the Episcopalian to the Presbyterian Church, we shall find the testimony equally strong and explicit. The General Assembly of that influential body in the United States has recorded its conviction in these words: "With respect to dancing, we think it necessary to observe that however plausible it may appear to some, it is perhaps not the less dangerous on account of that plausibility. When the practice is carried to its highest extremes, all admit the consequences to be fatal; and why not, then, apprehend danger from its incipient stages? It is certainly

in all its stages a fascinating and an infatuating practice. Let it once be introduced, and it is difficult to give it limits. It steals away our precious time, dissipates religious impressions, and hardens the heart."

Dr. Albert Barnes, the great Presbyterian Commentator, in a sermon on this subject says: "The whole process connected with dancing is inconsistent with the aim of life which the Christian professes to seek. He professedly lives for heaven. The soul, according to his professed views, is of a value which no words can estimate, and for which no amount of gold or diamonds would be an equal exchange. Meanwhile that child, which may be cut down in a moment, and fade like the flower, is trained under influences adverse to the soul. The training of the dancing-school, so far as it has any bearing at all, is a training to appear well, or to shine in the gay world. It is not a part of the training for the communion-table, or for the office of Sabbath School teacher, or to impart Christian consolation to the afflicted, or to qualify to enter heaven. . . . It is a world of splendour without enjoyment; of professions without sincerity; of flattery without soul; of smiles where the heart is full of envy and chagrin; where the cup of pleasure has dregs of wormwood, and where momentary bliss is succeeded by long nights of painful reminiscences and by despair. And shall Christian parents train up their children for such a world? No child dances into heaven, but many a one dances into hell."

I have thus given the opinions of high authorities in two of the great Protestant denominations—the Epis-

copalian and the Presbyterian. The position of the Methodist Church of Canada, in relation to this and kindred amusements, is clearly defined in her Discipline. On page 112 we read: "But in cases of neglect of duties of any kind, imprudent conduct, indulging in sinful tempers or words, the buying, selling, or using intoxicating liquors as a beverage, dancing, playing at games of chance, attending theatres, horse-races, circuses, dancing parties, or patronizing dancing-schools, or taking such other amusements as are obviously of misleading or questionable moral tendency, or disobedience to the order and discipline of the Church,—First, let private reproof be given by the Superintendent (Minister), or the Leader of the Class. On a second offence, the Superintendent or Leader may take one or two faithful friends, and if there be acknowledgment of the fault and proper humiliation, we will bear with him for a season. On a third offence, let the case be brought before the Society, or a select number, and if there be no sign of real humiliation, the offender must be cut off."

Now, do you think that Christian ministers and Church courts wish to prohibit the enjoyment of anything which does not hazard the eternal welfare of those over whom they watch, as men who must give an account unto God? These rules are not enacted by ministers alone, but by ministers and laymen acting in their joint capacity in the interests of religion and morality. I know very well how plausibly some people reason on this subject. In the first place, they tell us that many other things are just as inconsistent

as the dance; and that is perfectly true, but "two wrongs cannot make one right." In the next place they ask us, what harm can there be in parlour dancing when a few friends meet together? I have already admitted that in the act itself, considered in the abstract, there is no harm at all. But people do not dance in the abstract, and you are bound to look at the amusement with all its associations and tendencies; and in general these are evil, only evil, and that continually. And therefore the safe way is to "abstain from all appearance of evil." Plead as you will for the dance, *when it comes in, religion goes out*. I am told that it is on the increase, especially in the higher circles of religious society. I am told that it is introduced into Methodist families, and that the ministers wink at it, and have not the courage to grapple with the innovation. Then, so much the worse for the families that introduce it, and the ministers that shrink from the discharge of duty, and violate their solemn ordination vows. I do not expect to make an enemy by the preaching of this sermon. You may not all see as I do on this question, but you will give me credit for the courage of my convictions, and the faithful discharge of my duty. But I take a step in advance of this. I claim that the views presented in this discourse are scriptural, and are in accordance with the views of the most intelligent and pious Christians of all ages and all Churches, and it is a very serious thing for you to set them at defiance. If what I preach is true, you disregard it at the peril of your soul. And so I come to plead with you to-night. With those of you who

are not Christians, I can plead only on the grounds already enumerated. I can only say, the pleasure dance is injurious to health. It produces dissipation of mind. It tends to subvert and destroy our native instincts of modesty. But I plead with Christians on higher grounds than these. "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." "Ye are the light of the world," and you are commanded to "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." You are to "abstain from all appearance of evil." You are to "put on Christ," as an actor puts on costume. You are to personate Christ—to act just as He acted among men. And I ask you if you can be all this, and do all this, and at the same time patronize the pleasure dance of modern society? No; you cannot, and you know it. Then I plead with you to come out from the world and be separate. Stand with Christ, and Paul, and the holy men and women of all ages, with your face as a flint against a custom of society which is fraught with peril, disgrace, and ruin. I plead with you as parents. God will hold you and me responsible for the habits and conduct of our children so far as we are able to control the one and guide the other. And every man or woman is able to determine what shall, and what shall not, be allowed in the home; and what shall and what shall not be allowed in the conduct of the inmates of that home. I have no sympathy with those parents

who plead that the young people overrule their wishes in matters of this sort. There must be no compromise when principle and truth are involved. God said of Eli, "I will judge his house forever, for the iniquity which he knoweth, because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not."

I plead with you as Methodists. By your love to the Church of your choice and affections, by the memory of its sainted Founder and its sainted heroes, by the unbroken testimony it has given on this subject for more than a hundred years,—do not bring reproach upon its teachings and its discipline by opening your parlour for the dance, or permitting your children to attend parties where the dance is indulged.

I plead with every pure-minded woman in the name of the white flower of virtue and modesty, which is her crown of glory, that she will never place herself under a law of social custom which might render it possible for her to be pastured on with palms of pollution and adulterous eyes.

And I charge you, one and all, to remember that the day of solemnity draweth nigh. The garland of roses will be exchanged for the death-damp on the brow. The music and the banquet will be exchanged for the coffin and the shroud. Time, like the vapour cloud on the mountain side, will vanish, and eternity will unfold its hidden grandeurs. Live for that hour, and when it comes there will be

Two hands upon the breast,
And labour's done ;
Two pale feet cross'd in rest,
The race is won.

Two eyes with coin weights shut,
And all tears cease ;
Two lips where grief is mute,
And wrath at peace.

Two hands at work addres't,
Aye for His praise ;
Two feet that never rest,
Walking His ways.

Two eyes that look above,
Still, through all tears ;
Two lips that breathe but love,
Never more fears.



